

## Memorandum

**To: Interested Persons**  
**From: Christine Dahlberg, Associate Director**  
**Re: Partners in Policymaking Academy**

Are you a parent of a child with a disability or a person with a disability? Would you like to see a barrier free society where everyone is a valued member of their community? Are you interested in promoting change within your community? ; within the state?

If you answered **YES!** to these questions, you might be interested in becoming one of a growing number of over 400 people who are graduates of **Indiana's Partners in Policymaking Academy.**

The Partners in Policymaking Academy offers eight weekends of intensive training designed to educate participants to be active partners with those who make policy. Graduates will be equipped with the necessary skills and information on best practices over a wide spectrum of issues to play a leadership role in policy development and advocacy within their communities and at the state level. School principles, school boards, city councils, mayors, county and state officials, state legislators, state agency boards, and federal legislators and agencies are just some of the policymakers Partner graduates will influence.

Indiana graduates have become the school board members, state or local agency commission/council members, mayors councils and legislative committee appointees who make the decisions that affect us all. Other graduates have started new independent living centers, parent groups, or have become active members of local and statewide advocacy organizations. Partners have worked with legislators and other advocates to introduce and pass new state laws, with their mayors to implement access polices, and with state agency officials to improve policies and programs. Partners are known for their tenacity and enthusiasm and most of all, for making a difference.

The Council is proud to be the sponsor of the Partners Academy. We invest about \$5,000 in training and expenses for each new Partner and additional funds to help support the networking and further training of graduates. In return for this investment, candidates must be willing to sign an agreement to attend all eight sessions and complete homework assignments including a personal community project.

If you are someone who can make this level of commitment, applications for the next class will be coming out in late spring or early summer. Watch the Council's On Target newsletter for an announcement or call Partners in Policymaking toll free at 800-723-7620 or 317-632-3561 and ask to be placed on the list to receive an application when they are available for the Class of 2003.

## **WHAT IS PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING?**

- An intensive training course designed to provide tools required to enable parents of children and adults with disabilities to play a leadership role in policy development and advocacy within their communities.
- The Partners in Policymaking Academy provides leadership training, skill building, and up-to-date information on best practices regarding local, state, and national issues that affect individuals with disabilities.
- Upon graduation from the Partners in Policymaking Academy, participants will be fully prepared to advocate for themselves and to work for change in public policy.
- Graduates will possess the skills necessary to educate policymakers regarding options that promote full participation within their communities by all person with disabilities.
- The Academy is based on a program developed by the Minnesota DD Council. Partners in Policymaking is widely recognized in the United States and overseas.

## **WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TRAINING?**

Each year, a group of 35 adults with disabilities and parents with children who have disabilities are selected through an application process to participate in the Partners training course. The project actively seeks and encourages individuals of various ethnic backgrounds to apply.

Partners in Policymaking strives for a balance of men and women from urban and rural areas across the state of Indiana. Each Partners training course is committed to an enrollment of at least a 50% representation from parents who have a child with a disability and adult consumers.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE?**

Training is the key to the program! Each Partner must make a commitment to attend ALL training sessions and advocate for systems change. Partners attend two day training sessions, eight times a year, with each session beginning Friday at noon and concluding late Saturday afternoon. Expenses for travel, respite care, food, lodging, interpreters, and attendant services are provided. Each session is devoted to specific topics with national, state and local experts as presenters. Partners are expected to complete assignments between sessions and to commit to one major assignment in their home town.

In general, session topics may include:

- (1) History - Independent Living, Parent Movement, People First/Self-Advocates Movement
- (2) Education - Understanding Special Education, the Development of Inclusive Education
- (3) Supported Living, Personal Futures Planning, Family Supports, and Best Practices in Employment
- (4) Assistive Technology , ADA
- (5) Federal Policy and Legislative Issues, Effective Communication with Policymakers
- (6) State and Local Policy, Services and Legislative Issues , Preparing Testimony for Legislative Hearings
- (7) Community Organizing and Working with Advocacy Organizations.